

Peachland dethrones Armstrong for Okanagan water conservation title

Defending residential outdoor water use pledge contest title holder Armstrong dethroned

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Armstrong Mayor Chris Pieper congratulates Peachland Mayor Cindy Fortin on her community winning the 2019 Make Water Work Challenge. (File photo)

Peachland has been named the Make Water Work Challenge community winner for 2022.

It marks the third time Peachland has won the contest since it started in 2011, the previous years the community reigned victorious being 2016 and 2019.

The water conservation initiative was started to tackle how to reduce residential outdoor water use, the second-highest water consumption use in the Okanagan Valley during the summer months.

The intent was to engage Okanagan communities in a serious issue in a fun, participatory way.

The District of Summerland actually racked up the highest pledge count overall, but the winner is chosen on a population per capita basis which favoured Peachland.

Announced at the annual general meeting via Zoom for the Okanagan Basin Water Board on Friday, Peachland Mayor Cindy Fortin, an OBWB member, said the participation of residents in her community demonstrates the growing realization of the importance of water conservation in the valley.

“At the end of the day, we are all in this together and this is about getting the message out,” Fortin said.

“Our behaviour now gets passed on to future generations and if it becomes second nature to them to conserve water, that is a positive step for our future and that is what’s important here. Let’s keep it going.”

Armstrong Mayor Chris Pieper, the defending community champion and multiple contest winner, congratulated Fortin for her community’s contest win, offering a basket of cheese and wine as a congratulatory gesture.

Pieper sent a message to the board meeting, acknowledging Armstrong was faced by challenges that interrupted its focus on the water conservation contest, from COVID-19 to being chosen as the evacuation centre for animals from the surrounding wildfires.

“We had everything in the fairgrounds this year except the fair so it was a humbling experience,” said Pieper, referring to the cancellation of the annual Armstrong Fall Fair for the second consecutive year.

“We look forward to a more normal 2022 and a chance to win the challenge for the fifth time next year.”

Corinne Jackson, communications director for OBWB and coordinator for the Make Water Work Challenge, cautioned the underlying themes of the challenge continue to remain relevant in September.

“We are still in a drought, still reports of farmers having difficulty maintaining food crops, and fish are struggling to survive so please continue to make water work better in our landscapes and yards and visit the Make Water Work website for tips on how to do that,” she said.

Sue McKortoff, Osoyoos mayor and chair of the OBWB, added the contest is another way to keep thinking of how to consume water in a sensible way outdoors since valley residents live in a semi-arid topography and climate.

“If we ever forget that, then we have a fire or something to remind us...it needs to be in the back of our minds all the time,” she said.

“I also feel we need to make water work inside the house as well. I say three-minute showers is what we need. My sister got mad at me for thinking about saying that in public, but I said too late, I already did.”